

ORLEANS PARISH GRAND JURY

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

JIM HICKS

Jan. 11, 1968

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PRESENT: MR. JIM GARRISON, DISTRICT ATTORNEY,
MESSRS. JAMES ALCOCK, ANDREW SCIAMBRA,
NUMA BERTEL, ALVIN OSER, ASSISTANT
DISTRICT ATTORNEYS -

MEMBERS OF THE ORLEANS PARISH GRAND JURY

WITNESS:

JAMES ("JIM") HICKS

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Reported by:
Maureen B. Thiel
Secretary,
Orleans Parish Grand Jury

JIM HICKS, appearing before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury on January 11, 1968, was questioned and answered as follows:

MR. GARRISON:

- Q. Jim, a few minutes ago you said you were extremely nervous and I thought I would point out at the outset that I am not going to try and trap you in any way and neither are the Grand Jury, they are just interested in having the benefit of what you remember. You were at Dealy Plaza when the assassination occurred and none of us were. You are not a target of the office in any sense and we are interested in having the benefit of your recollections. So if you relax and tell us when you arrived on the scene, what you saw, and everything you can remember, and what I am going to do is turn you loose so you can tell it in a narrative way rather than ask you a lot of questions. Tell us of when you first arrived there, when you first noticed things happening, et cetera. Just tell us about it.
- A. Well, I arrived there before the parade really got started, it was coming down Main Street when I found a place to stop to watch the parade. Before the parade turned I first noticed the car in the parking lot, it had

two fellows in the car, one was

Q. In the parking lot, about where? Is that the one by the Book Depository?

A. Yes, that's the one alongside the back. I first noticed the car, it didn't make too much sense to me because everybody was standing around there, but it did after a few moments, after what happened. At the time of the assassination, where the President's car was coming down the road there I heard the shots. I heard four shots and I also saw the President's head explode. It wasn't like something that was shot, it just seemed to explode I guess is the best way to say it. There was a sign, a caution sign, alongside the road that was hit, at least I believe it was hit, because the shot came over my head and I think they hit the sign. Anyway, the Dallas Police Department car, people I assume to be because one of them was in uniform and the other two weren't, took the sign down there I don't know anything more about the sign.

MR. GARRISON:

(Pointing to aerial photograph of Dealey Plaza)

North is up. Here is the Book Depository. This is

Houston Street, here is Main, and here is what they call the grassy knoll, this is a very steep knoll, it is steeper than it looks. This is kind of an arcade. The parade came down Main Street, turned right at Houston and made a second turn which caused it to slow down on Elm, and the shots began approximately when the parade reached this point and continued to about this point. The two sides of the grassy knoll have unusual features, this is a stone wall from which some of the shooting occurred and we have witnesses to that, this is a cement stairway that goes up, and this is the parking area, some of the cars are hidden under the trees, and the parking area continues back there. This is north, this is the way the parade was going, this is what they call the triple underpass, its really three streets, Elm, Main and Commerce going on one overpass, its a single overpass, but it is a triple underpass. The famous picket fence is concealed by the trees that goes down to here and then down to here. Some of the activity observed by other witnesses immediately after the car has pulled off began here cars began milling around and pulling out. But what

Jim Hicks is talking about is generally here in this area. Jim, if you would come up and point to where you were it might be a little easier, you can start off with where you went and what you heard.

- A. Well, approximately right in here is where the car was, with the two men , one kneeling, at the time it looked like he had a piece of pipe or broom handle or something like that, it didn't look like a weapon,

JUROR:

Where was he kneeling?

- A. In the trunk of the car.

Q. Where were you standing, Jim?

- A. Right in here approximately.

The shots seemed to me like they come over the top of my head. The sign that was here was approximately here.

MR. GARRISON:

How long did it take before they removed the sign?

- A. It was within thirty minutes.

JUROR:

Were there any holes in the sign?

- A. The sign was marked, I don't know whether it had any holes in it or not, I didn't look at it that close.

Q. How many people were in the crowd? Was it like a mass of people, like Mardi Gras here?

A. There weren't all that many people, quite a few but I wouldn't say it was like it would be down here.

Q. You were facing toward the street, what made you notice the car if it was in back of you?

A. I was looking for a place to stand.

Q. Then you faced the front and the shots came over your head?

A. Yes.

MR. GARRISON:

From what other direction did you hear shots coming from?

A. It seemed like to me there were shots coming from here and here (pointing to picture).

Q. In relationship to the time you first heard the shots fired, how long before the first shot was fired that you saw this man?

A. I saw him beforehand, I was like everybody else looking around and the car was gone when I turned back.

Q. Where were most of the people running after the shots were fired, up the grassy knoll?

A. Yes.

Q. Were the police running up there too?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you see the police questioning anyone in that area?

A. I stopped a man and told him who I was and about the sign, and all.

JUROR:

Was that a uniform policeman?

A. Yes.

MR. GARRISON:

Did the Federal Government ever question you about this at all?

A. No.

Q. You say one man was kneeling in the trunk of a car?

A. Yes.

Q. Where was the other man?

A. The other man was standing beside the car.

Q. You remember anything about the description of the car?

A. I told Mr. Garrison at the time, last July, that it was a '56 model Pontiac.

Q. And the color of it?

A. If I remember right, a brown, sort of beige, off-color white.

JUROR:

Q. It was backed up to the fence?

A. It was back in here.

Q. Facing north or south?

A. It was facing here.

Q. It was backed up to the fence, is there a fence behind that knoll?

A. Yes, there was.

MR. GARRISON:

It has been torn down since.

A. There was also a fence going across here headed toward a park area.

Q. Was there a gateway to get through there?

A. Yes, but it was blocked off.

Q. Did you look in the direction of the car after the shots?

A. Yes, the car was gone.

Q. Did you look during the shooting?

A. No.

Q. Any particular reason why?

A. Well, at the time the shots were going off I don't exactly know what I was doing, I think I was trying to hide and everything else. There were a lot of shots

JUROR:j

Q. Did you hit the ground?

A. No, I don't think I hit the ground.

Q. I mean, did you duck to get out of the way.

- Q. How many different areas did you hear shots coming from?
- A. At least two.
- Q. At least two you mean besides the direction of the Depository?
- A. Like I say, I don't know about this up here, I didn't hear any shots come from up there, the ones I heard came from here and here (pointing).

JUROR:

You saw the President when he fell?

- A. Yes.
- Q. You were that close? About how far?
- A. Approximately in here. I would say about 50 feet at the most.
- Q. He went frontward, sideward?
- A. Well, when he was hit he sorta went backward to one side. There was one thing that when I read about it I wondered how he could go back this way when he was shot from the other way. It doesn't make sense, does it?
- Q. In other words, if the bullet came from the Book Depository he would have fallen forwards rather than back to the left.
- Q. I think the Report made mention of the fact that his throat was torn open which would be the result of a

bullet from the back or side rather than from above.

MR. GARRISON:

About the throat - now this is off the record, but nothing in here can be mentioned outside anyway - we have talked with one of the top pathologists in the country and he has conclusively demonstrated that the throat wound had to be an entrance wound because from the back there are so many throat bones/^{that}breaking those throat bones would have brought the throat bones with them and torn a big hole, it had to be a puncture entrance wound - that was the conclusion of the doctors at Parkland too, the conclusion of all the doctors. Incidentally, the cause of death is described by the doctor in charge, Dr. John McLelland as a gunshot wound of the left temple, that is made real gray so it is kind of hard to read, if you have a magnifying glass - but apparently they were stuck with it and had to put it in, but it is a gunshot wound of the left temple.

JUROR:

That means his face was turned this way?

A. No, he was turning, facing to the right all the time

and it happened in five or six seconds. You had shooting from here and from here, you also had some shooting from the back; for example, the wound in Governor Connally had to come from the Dal-Tex Building or the Records Room because its almost straight in the back and could not have come from the Depository. Jim, who did talk to you and who did question you about this?

A. Nobody except you.

Q. Nobody took a statement from you?

A. This one officer, I told him what I had seen and he took my name and I have not heard anything from him.

Q. You say Officer, do you know exactly what he was a member of?

A. The Dallas Police Force.

Q. What about any of the Secret Service men in the area?

A. I did not know who the Secret Service men were.

Q. But you did report it to the Dallas Police and you have never heard from any official authority, so to speak, concerning what you saw?

A. No.

Q. Were you living in Dallas at the time?

A. Yes.

Q. How long did you stay there after the assassination?

A. Maybe three weeks.

Q. You say you saw the President's head explode. In relation to the shot, you say it came over your head or from those directions, did it appear to you that the shot that exploded the head came from those directions?

A. Yes, very definitely. For one reason I think this way is because when his head exploded his blood and everything else in a backward way ...

Q. Hit the motorcycle policeman to the rear on the left?

A. Yes, the motorcycle policeman - I did notice that the blood and all that going to the back.

Q. Brain matter.

Q. Did you have occasion to discuss what happened with any other people on the scene afterwards?

A. Yes, everybody was talking to everybody.

Q. This isn't courtroom evidence, but to give us the benefit of their impressions. What was the impression that you gathered from individuals you talked to?

A. Most of the people felt that the shots came from the mound. Everybody was running toward that position. Like the rest of them, I did too.

Q. Incidentally, none of the witnesses who thought the shots

came from the knoll were called before the Warren Commission.

JUROR:

Did they take a lot of the names of the people?

A. I saw a policeman going through the crowd.

Q. Did this policeman ask you what your name was?

A. I told him.

Q. Did he write it down?

A. Yes.

Q. You don't know his badge number or anything?

A. No.

JUROR:

Where is Oswald supposed to have been in the Depository?

A. Sixth floor, right here.

WITNESS:

There is also one thing I forgot about - it looked to me like the windshield that the car the President was riding in, was cracked.

Q. But you can't find out about that because the car was dismantled afterwards. It has all been taken apart.

Q. Jim, could you tell us all you remember about the two people you saw by the automobile?

A. Well, the one kneeling in the car looked to be - I would think Spanish, Dallas has a lot of Spanish people

in it. The other one I wouldn't say he was colored, but he was darker than the one kneeling.

Q. When you say he had an object in his hand, what position was the object in?

A. He had it between his legs, he had the object up like this.

Q. Would you say similar to a parade rest, when you hold a rifle, say, in an arms drill?

A. Like I say, I didn't pay too much attention because it did not look like a rifle.

Q. Why did it not look like a rifle?

A. It was bigger, it looked like a pipe.

Q. The barrel part was bigger?

A. Yes.

Q. What about the other person, anything in his hand?

A. Not that I recall.

Q. JUROR:

Were there other cars around it? Or was it by itself?

A. Yes, quite a few other cars. This was a parking area, people who wanted to see the parade, all this back in here was full of cars, and this was full of cars.

Q. Were there any people standing around?

A. Quite a few people were standing around.

Q. Were there any cars in front of this car?

A. No, it was backed up to the fence.

Q. The trunk of the car was open and the man was kneeling in the trunk?

A. Yes.

Q. Where would the manhole cover be?

MR. GARRISON:

The entrance to the sewer, among many entrances, is right here at the corner and the entire substructure of the sewer - you can see some of the sewer entrances here and here - and the sewers are big enough to hold a man. I will show you pictures next week, and inside you can see a convertible, I don't know why, but you can. There is another sewer just about here, but that was filled in a few days after the assassination, they covered it over and it isn't there anymore. In the diagram they introduced of the sewer system there is a lamp and here would be the outlet. The original diagram, before the assassination, said 'lamp and inlet' (which is the sewer). The diagram introduced after the assassination by the FBI has a change and it says 'street lamp'. What they have done and stooped to are beyond belief. The inlet is not mentioned anymore, it has been removed from the diagram, but it used to be there. I will go into that later on.

JUROR:

Mr. Hicks, what is your business?

A. Surveyor.

Q. Are you a Texas by birth?

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A. No, Arkansas.

Q. Did you notice how they were dressed, were they in suits or

A. No, they had only regular work clothes looked to me like.

Q. You were standing in front of them?

A. Yes, I was in front of them.

Q. Could you see the license plate, a Texas plate or what State?

A. At the time, like I say, I didn't put too much emphasis on anything.

Q. Did you see any smoke or smell any?

A. No. All I heard was the shots. I did not see anything. If anybody said they saw any smoke I don't see how they did it.

Q. Did it come like a barrage or one shot after another?

A. It sounded like to me at the time that they were all together, just bang, bang and then another bang.

Q. Are you a veteran?

A. Yes.

Q. What branch of Service?

A. Navy.

Q. Then you are somewhat familiar with shots coming from which direction? The directions which sound would come from?

A. If a shot goes over you hear a zing. And I definitely

heard a zing.

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Q. MR. GARRISON:

What was your reaction when you read later in the day that they had captured the lone assassin from the Book Depository?

A. I could not believe it - its impossible.

JUROR:

Q. Did you turn immediately after you heard the shot?

A. Yes.

Q. And the car was gone in that short time?

A. Yes.

Q. You did not hear the car start up?

A. No.

Q. I wonder about the possibility of an echo in there area there - I remember I lived in Dallas - but Dealey Plaza was built after I left there.

A. Well, I didn't hear any echoes. What I heard was shots and they came overhead. They were not echoes.

MR. GARRISON:

You heard the zing coming over your head?

A. Yes.

JUROR:

Now many?

A. I would say at least one came over my head that I heard the zing.

Q. You went to the parade alone?

A. Yes, I wasn't married then.

Q. What was the business about last night?

A. I don't know, I was sleeping in bed and the next thing I know I am going through the window.

Q. Was it men, or

A. Two men.

Q. Did you get a description of them?

A. Well, I would know them if I saw them again.

Q. I just can't believe someone would harass a witness like this

MR. GARRISON:

This is an improvement, they have been killing them.

JUROR:

Q. Did they throw you through the plate glass window that goes out onto the patio?

A. He didn't throw me, he pushed me.

Q. How high were you?

A. Sixth floor.

Q. They didn't say anything to you?

A. No.

MR. GARRISON:

How ^{big}~~high~~ is that balcony on the other side of the window?

A. About 3 feet, very narrow.

JUROR:

Q. They let you go as soon as they pushed you through there?

A. As I went through there, they ran, it caused a lot of noise, and I jumped up off the floor and ran after them out the door and they were gone.

Q. How did they get in your room? Did they have a key?

A. Well, I don't remember if I locked the door or not.

Q. Don't those doors automatically lock?

A. I think they do.

MR. SCIAMBRA:

Another point brought out here, I am not sure that everyone knows or is aware ^{the effect} that/the press has on witnesses and potential witnesses because I am sure the press has hurt us tremendously with people we have attempted to talk to. An interesting story, and Mr. Hicks can tell you about it, ^{and things} are the phone calls/that were said to Mr. Hicks concerning his visit to New Orleans and the effect of him coming here to see the two-headed monster, Jim Garrison. Tell the Jury about some of the things people told you on your way down here.

JUROR:

Was this on the plane?

A. Well, a lot of different places. I have been convicted of

conspiracy; if I come down here there is no way to get home;

Q. Didn't you tell me that your home town paper ran a headline that you were charged in the conspiracy?

A. There was a warning issued for me.

MR. GARRISON:

Well, that is simply a misunderstanding.

JUROR:

You mean you have been harassed in your own home town?

A. Quite a bit.

Q. Well, our local press and TV media didn't do any good either.

A. I got ten or fifteen crank calls. The Police Department has been pretty nice and has run a special car up there in front of the house.

Q. Have you been threatened?

A. They didn't exactly threaten me, it was more or less my family, better shut up or things will happen to your family.

Q. Last night did you get any phone calls in your room?

A. No.

Q. What time did it happen last night?

A. The policeman got up there about 1:15 or 1:20, about ten or fifteen minutes after it happened.

I don't really know if they had anything to do with the investigation, or whether it was a robbery attempt, or what it was, I just don't know.

Q. Were they white men, Cubans, or colored men?

A. Colored men.

Q. They pulled you out of bed?

A. I was laying there asleep and the next thing I knew or when I come to my senses, I was going toward the window.

Q. They must have been pretty husky?

A. One was quite a bit bigger than I am - and the security guard downstairs said he met two men coming down the stairs, or the elevator or something, and he looked at their ID cards and let them go.

Q. Were they dressed in suits?'

A. No, I would say slacks, not dressed up.

Q. It was cool last night, did they have jackets on?

A. I didn't notice.

MR. GARRISON:

You mean to say that while you were going through the window, you didn't notice what they had on?

JUROR:

Did the window break?

A. Yes.

Q. Someone said this kind of window would give.

A. This one gave, and he went right on through it.

MR. GARRISON:

Any other questions?

Thank you very much, Mr. Hicks.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I certify that the preceding is a true and correct copy of testimony given, under oath, before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury, on the 11th day of January, 1968, and reduced to typewriting by me.

Maureen B. D. Lief